

THE CORRESPONDENT.

Magna est Veritas et Prevalebit.

VOL. I.

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NO. 15.

CORRESPONDENCE.

For the Correspondent.

QUERIES FOR CHRISTIANS.

Mr. Editor: I send you a few more queries, which perhaps will not be unacceptable, and though they evince a want of method and talent, yet they cannot fail, I think, from the glaring contradictions and absurdities they exhibit, to shew some little of the erroneousness of the Christian system. Had I sufficient time, I would collect all the objectionable passages in the Old and New Testaments, and put them in the form of queries. Perhaps some of your readers will take the hint and perform the task, especially when they reflect that it is a species of writing the best adapted to strike the mind.

1. Why did not Jesus possess the best means of promulgating his mission? Was not the art of printing, as Mr. Paine justly observes, one of those means?

2. If "the world could not contain (John 21, v. 25) all that Jesus did, if written," why have his disciples furnished us with only a few incoherent paragraphs and sentences; and what number of books must that be which the world cannot contain?

3. If the sign of the early Christians, immediately after their conversion, (Mark 16, v. 17,) was to cast out devils, speak with new tongues, take up serpents, drink any deadly thing without hurt, and lay hands on the weak and they should

recover, why is it not the sign of modern Christians? If it was necessary to produce belief then, why not necessary now, and especially with our missionaries who go to convert the Hindoos?

Jesus said, (Matt. 5, v. 17,) "I came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it," "eye for eye, stripe for stripe," &c. (Ex. 21, v. 24.) Did he not destroy it when he said, "Ye have heard that it hath been said, an eye for an eye, &c. (Matt. 5, v. 38,) but I say unto you that ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also;" "Again (Matt. 5, v. 33,) ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, thou shalt perform unto the Lord these oaths [they are commanded in several places of the Jewish laws] but I say unto you, *swear not at all*," &c. And when he acquitted the woman (John 8, v. 4) taken in the act of adultery, who by the law of Moses ought to have been stoned to death?

5. Did the owner of the vineyard act rationally when, because the fig-tree had borne no fruit for years, he, without asking the vine dresser the cause, ordered the tree to be cut down? (Luke 13, v. 7.) To whom does Jesus liken the owner of the vineyard?

6. What did Jesus mean when he said to his disciples, (Matt. 26, v. 45) "Sleep on now and take your rest," and in the next verse, "Rise, let us be going, and while he was

still talking (v. 26) with his disciples, came Judas, the chief priests and elders, and (v. 50) *laid hold of him.*" Did he not, when he said, "Rise, let us be going," believe the chief priests at a greater distance than they were, or is there any sense to be made of the passage?

7. How could Judas be the *friend* of Jesus, (as the latter calls the former, Matt. 26, v. 50) after he had *betrayed him*, and just after he had told the chief priests to *hold him fast*?

8. If Jesus ascended to heaven, why did he not do it publicly from Jerusalem? Why not previously appear to the whole city, and especially to the chief priests and elders, to convince them of the identity of his person? [As he was a spirit they could not crucify him.] For although the Jews and Gentiles were full of prodigies, yet with all their prodigies, no one, without art, was able to ascend into the clouds like a bird. This would have been convincing to the most obdurate among both Jews and Gentiles.

9. If the Jews have increased only to four millions in 3684 years, how soon will they be "in number as the dust (Gen. 13, v. 16) of the earth?"

10. If the sun was made on the fourth day, is the centre of the planetary system, and diffuses light, heat and life to all things within that system, what produced these properties prior to its existence? (Gen. 1.)

11. If God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam while he took out one of his ribs, how came he to know it without being told?

12. What was the name of that disease (see Psalm 38, v. 1 to 14) with which the "man after God's own heart" was so sorely afflicted?

13. When God told Adam and Eve to eat of every tree of the gar-

den except one, did he not know they would eat of it? If he did not, where was his foreknowledge? If he did, why permit, and afford every facility to commit the evil by placing at their side and permitting a subtle being to produce their ruin and that of their posterity? Was such a proceeding consistent with justice and humanity? Was it becoming a friend, a guide, and a father? Would any civilized man act such a tragic part towards his offspring?

14. We are told (Gen. 12, v. 2, 3) that God (the God of the Jews) made choice of Abraham's seed.—If it was so, ought it not to have been good? If it was not so, where was the wisdom and omniscience of God? If the seed was bad, why did he, after driving out the unoffending owners, give the Jews a land flowing with milk and honey—provide them with kings, priests, prophets and judges; in fact, govern them himself—punish them by fire, the sword, pestilence, famine, fiery serpents, bondage, &c. and at last expel them from that land which he gave them "for ever."

JULIAN.

For the Correspondent.

Mr. Editor: Is it not surprising that there should be found an order of men, who assume to be guardians and *renders* of religious opinions? Perhaps you will answer, that this is not more singular than the wind traffic carried on in the north of Europe by men called wizards. Reasoning, however, without the assistance of those facts which cast rather a disgusting aspect upon the character of men, I might have believed it utterly impossible that any sect of men should have arisen, possessed at the same time of ingenuity and turpitude, sufficient to make slaves of the rest of the world, by actually vending the hidden des-

tinies of a future life. But if in contradiction of all that philanthropists could have supposed, or that persons not initiated in the mystery, could have believed, the seeker after truth should be made acquainted with the grand secret by which the priest has risen to power, it would not require a very superior degree of sagacity to perceive, that a *monopoly* of certain creeds pregnant with the destinies of a hereafter, might follow as a matter of course. Under such a state of things, it would need no superior acuteness to foresee that a monopoly of various genuine decoctions of faith (if I may be allowed the expression) would be brought into the market. Well, what is it? Alas! it has cost the Christian world much blood and much sweat too.—But, what is it? It is the *parson's* living, and might, therefore, be termed *roast beef* and *plumb pudding*; both of which are “evidences” in this sense, “of things not seen.”—To those who will not be satisfied with this definition, I would say, perhaps, that it is the contents of a *sacred book*, which the priest opens once a week, and explains from a little eminence built up in a meeting house.

But, seriously, when I consider how much the world has been abused by the ever varying and undefinable qualities of this same faith; and when I consider that mankind might have been made both wise and better, more humane and more charitable, with half the trouble it has cost to puzzle and vex them with this enigma, I hope to stand in some measure excused if I give it my hearty malediction. Let us look only at the damage it has done to community, by taking the time and attention which might have been devoted to useful knowledge.

Study geography; (says common

sense) study history and natural philosophy; know something of the world you inhabit; become acquainted with your own natures, by reading the best histories of your own species, in different portions of this universe, and under various kinds of government; mark the different results, and reason about them; and you will be benefitted. Learn the real link you form in the grand chain of existence. Turn your attention to subjects of this kind, and you may, in truth, realize that humility which the doctors of faith vainly assume to teach. These are some of the suggestions of common sense; and I need hardly tell you, how much they have been thwarted by the teachers of religion, and by credulity. All inquisitiveness is put down by the single expression, “have faith;” and all solicitude for moral attainments is answered by, “seek first the kingdom of heaven, and all these things shall be added unto you.” And the people do seek the kingdom of heaven, because it is a kingdom they all wish to find after death.

It is, indeed, curious to see with what avidity all the old maps and descriptions of this kingdom, and the road leading thereto, are sought for by the multitude. On this subject, John Bunyan is unquestionable authority. His departure from the city of destruction; his passing through the slough of despondency; the load on his back of original sin; his winding path up the hill of difficulty; and, above all, his fight with old Satan himself; being all illustrated by engravings; are matter of fact points, which no Christian can doubt. This Devil, for instance, is a true Devil; and to suppose one of a different shape, would be little short of heresy. The features too, of Appolion, are the Devil's own fea-

tures. How wonder-struck would the pious Christian be, on his way to Bunyan's heavenly city, if he should see the Devil personated and habited like a common parson of the day. He would, undoubtedly, declare it a monstrous mistake. Indeed, none, perhaps, except those who had consulted history, would recognize it to be a *true likeness*.—Here, then, is another reason for studying the history of man, rather than dissertations of faith; and a reason, too, for the opposition of the clergy to such study. For, if such knowledge should be more common than piety, the people might learn to know the Devil, whenever and wherever they might see him—whether in a puppet-show or in a pulpit.

But if the clergy have retarded the light and knowledge of this world, it must be confessed they have not been remiss in their enquiries about, or description of, the *invisible* world. Where they obtained all their data, may be a question; although they certainly (or at least many of them) have given us enchanting accounts of the country and city of the heavenly kingdom. He, therefore, that would enjoy this heavenly abode, ought not to complain if he is obliged to pay something for the benefit of those who have made him acquainted with the country.—The pavements of pure gold are worth something; and if the religious devotee thinks the article overcharged to him, he certainly will not withhold his tithes when he is told of the gates and walls of purest diamond. But, if after all, he should hold fast his purse-strings, something doubting whether or not he is to get his monies' worth, let him be told, that on quitting this world, and on his arrival in the next, he shall be taken to this heavenly city, in a chariot brilliant in living sapphires;

guarded also by a grand escort of angels and cherubims, and he must be a sorry fellow indeed, and a bad Christian, if he do not pay freely for the benefit of the *embassadors* of such a kingdom. Such are the lures held out to the multitude, that even the incredulous listen with pleasure; and for a time seem to forget the interestedness of their heavenly guides.

LOOKER ON.

For the Correspondent.

BIBLE INCONSISTENCIES.

MR. EDITOR: It was my intention, in my present number, to have glanced at the absurdity of God's hardening Pharaoh's heart, and then punishing him for doing that which it was impossible for him to avoid. But for "particular reasons," I am induced to turn my attention to another subject. I stated in my first number, in your paper, that if I were known to be the author of that article, by the inhabitants of the vicinity in which I live, I should be stigmatised as a cold-blooded wretch, who ought to be avoided by every friend of Christianity. My prediction was not entirely without foundation. Since writing that article, many pious souls have suspected me to be its author, and a few days since, I received a discourse of Dr. Channing's on the evidences of Christianity, from the editor of a religious paper in this town, devoted to the dissemination of *liberal* principles. The Unitarian minister, (whose meetings I regularly attend) also took the alarm: on the Sabbath after I received Dr. Channing's discourse, he preached a sermon on the evidences of the Christian religion, from II Samuel, chap. xxiv. ver. 1. "And again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and

Judah." After acknowledging that the Bible contained many errors, which he attributed, principally, to translators and transcribers, he labored hard to show the truth of revealed religion—and I was not the only person that noticed he directed a good share of his discourse particularly to me; but he advanced no arguments which were capable of converting me, and I left the "house of God," with all the abominable *sin* of *disbelief* which I possessed when I entered it.

If a man doubt the truth of any passages in the Bible, it is immediately asserted that it is owing to his giving it but a careless perusal; whereas, if he were to study it more attentively, and look into it more philosophically, he would, unless prevented by prejudice, readily acknowledge its truth; but I have no hesitation in asserting that the effect is entirely the reverse. It is by reading the Bible carelessly, without reflection, and with a predetermination to believe the whole, that so many are made its dupes. Neither do I hesitate to say, that any man, possessing good natural powers of mind, who is unprejudiced, and who will give the text, which I have quoted, a critical examination, will acknowledge that it contains nothing but the most puerile absurdity. "And again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel." Now let this sentence receive a careless perusal, and it will appear perfectly rational; but it cannot stand the test of criticism. It is representing God in the image of man, with all his passions. There is nothing which appears to me more inconsistent with the perfection of God, than that his anger should be raised against a nation, and in order to punish them, that he should instigate their ruler to break his laws, and

then as a punishment to him, to cause a pestilence among the people. If God intended to punish them, would it not have been more rational, to have punished them without involving David in the affair? Our parson said, David was punished because he numbered the people against God's will—and because it would fill his heart with pride, and make him depend more upon his own strength, and less upon the favour of the Lord.—But our godlike man probably did not perceive the inconsistency of this argument. God *punished* him for his vanity in numbering Israel, when this very verse asserts that "God *moved* David to number Israel." If this is not inconsistent with the principles of a just and wise God, I must confess I am entirely unacquainted with the definition of *consistency*, *justice* or *wisdom*. It is singular, indeed, that people will so totally divert themselves of reason as to believe a just God will *move* a man to commit a crime, as a means of punishment to others, and that he should punish this man for the crime he committed by Divine influence. And there is as great an inconsistency with Divine perfection, in supposing it was not the *will* of God to have Israel numbered: for, to say nothing of its being inconsistent with the universal acknowledgement of all, that God's will must be done, it is contrary to what is asserted in the text above quoted. It appears by that, that it *was* God's will to have them numbered—he *moved* David to number them, and nothing can be more absurd than that it should be God's *will* that they should *not*, and at the same time that they *should* be numbered.

A. R.

Greenfield, Mass. April, 1827.

For the Correspondent.

REVIVALS.

"Oh! would mankind but take truth for their guide,
And force the helm from prejudice and pride;
Then once these maxims fixed—that God's our friend—
Virtue our good, and happiness our end—
How soon would reason o'er the world prevail,
And error, fraud, and superstition fail."

MR. EDITOR.—Among the numerous periodical publications of the day, to which I have access, there are none that afford me more diversion than those devoted to the propagation of Christianity:—not only by the contrariety of doctrines they recognize and support, and the supercilious scurrility they are ever heaping upon each other—but also by the preposterous and romantic enthusiasm with which they so plentifully abound. The whole mass is one continued series of the most extravagant farrago—betokening the quixotic madness of the writers, and requiring no small degree of patience in the impartial reader, to give it a careful perusal. In running the eye over this disordered mass, the attention is continually arrested by big lettered words, such as "revivals," "the good work goes on," "outpourings of the spirit," &c. in which we are told of persons "receiving strength," "bringing home the hallowed flame," and that "mercy drops" have fallen in such and such a place, with an abundance of this childish nonsense, too ridiculous to be thought of. Instances of the most fanatic madness are portrayed, under the appellation of "religious experiences," and "revivals," in high sounding language, lauding to the skies the mad pranks of the deluded victims of their diabolical arts, and publishing to the world with unblushing impudence, the success with which their foul artifices have been crowned.

These revivals, although they are

inserted as the most important topics of the paper, are but another name for the most wretched delirium that can affect the mental faculties. Nothing is more deserving of disgust than the means employed in getting them up. When a priest, by several years of unwearied perseverance in preaching the wily schemes of delusion, has caused an outrageous commotion among his parishioners, called an awakening, he bears the reputation among his brother *black coats* of being a special favourite of God. But it most generally happens, that the malady is brought about by some puny vagabond itinerant, prowling about from place to place, who, by his smooth-tongued insinuations, at first invigles the conceit of a few credulous females—then strives to exasperate the ignorant multitude against his cousin german, the devil, and threatens them with the torments of hell as a just infliction of an incensed God, for their froward and incorrigible propensities, and promises the never ceasing joys of heaven to those who sieze upon the opportune mercy held out to them. His discourse is directed to simple and credulous people, whose minds he fills with the vagaries of his own diseased imagination; and what with puerile and absurd tales, together with practicing every provocative, and allurements that can interest the passions in his favour, his motley audience become completely spell bound. The imagination is haunted by scare crows, and bug-bear stories, which not unfrequently produce downright insanity, and set the vicinity all about in an uproar. Nothing is done but to attend "prayer meetings," and "conferences." The mechanic leaves his work, the merchant shuts his shop, and all hie to the place of rendezvous. Up gets the priest behind

his desk, and with looks demure, doles out a woeful medley of grotesque and discordant lingo. Becoming animated as he proceeds, and, bringing his clenched fists half way from the pulpit to the broad aisle, denounces *instant and eternal damnation*, choosing to

"Draw each moving argument from hell"

upon them unless they repent forthwith. He tells the tearful, whining audience that they stand upon the brink of hell's gaping pit of fire and brimstone!—The infernal den and its grizzly inmates, in all their hideous accoutrements, are so glowingly drawn up that they seem dancing in the vision of the culprits. No art is left untried, of impressing upon their minds the most preposterous and abhorrent doctrines that an infatuated priesthood can invent.

It would be too tedious, and quite superfluous, to note the many silly and absurd things said and done by the subjects of an awakening. But the most prominent marks of conviction are falling prostrate, and senseless, during the discourse, or in shedding "whole floods of briny tears" down the distorted phiz, accompanied with bitter groans and far fetched sighs. The congregation presents a most heart rending spectacle, begging all description to the sane and disinterested spectator. They seem wrought up to such a pitch of frenzy as banishes every rule of decency and decorum, and manifests the total absence of every thing pertaining to reason or sense.

It is inconceivably strange, that beings endowed with so good natural understandings as some of the beguiled people are, should succumb to such gross absurdities as these barefaced hypocrites palm upon their unsuspecting minds. But so it is: and no sooner has the reverend im-

postor gained a name among his followers tantamount to one of the apostles of the Bible, than he either proceeds to the next village to act over the same manœuvres, or, what is as frequently the case, commits some atrocious crime upon the persons or property of some of his adherents, that does, or should subject him to the halter.

I cannot close this subject which I feel that I have not been able to do justice to, without relating an anecdote of a female who had, or conceived she had been very copiously showered with what they are pleased to term "*mercy drops*." Absurd as as it may appear, it is no more than may be witnessed in almost every *revival*.—She had been attending a nocturnal conference, which was spun out to a very late hour. Her path home, lay across an extremely wet marsh, subjecting her to considerable difficulty in making her way through it. Arrived at the cottage, she began relating the Divine assistance she had received in guiding her over the best ground, and said that during her meandrous course from bog to bog, she was continually impressed with that beautiful passage of scripture,

"Goosey goosey gander,
Where shall I wander." J. M.

Greenfield, Mass. April 16, 1827.

For the Correspondent.

THE ORIGIN OF CHRISTIANITY; OR,
TRUTH DRAWN FROM FABLES.

CHAPTER IV.

(Continued from our last.)

I shall say little of the moral character of the primitive Christians, who, like all rising sects of fanatics among the poorer classes, cannot abandon themselves to many vices, and are too obscure to be noticed. While they were poor and lived in fraternal

union, they were, probably, devout, humble, austere, and kind to one another; but it is evident, from the statements of early Christian writers, and particularly from St. Epiphanius, that some sects among them, were, at least, as debauched and corrupted as any of the Gentiles; and it appears from his works, that the nightly meetings of some sects of Christians, surpassed in obscenity and disgusting scenes, every thing that has been said of the followers of the Syrian Goddess, by Lucian and Apuleius. From the unanimous consent of historians, profane and ecclesiastic, it is manifest, that no sect became so soon, and so generally corrupted, and given to the most odious vices, as the fathers of the church themselves confess. In later times, Rome is known to have offered the the most abominable crimes, together with the most disgusting and licentious debauchery. Alcanius, talking of that city, says, "*Nunc caput est scelerum quæ caput orbis erat.*" Rome, formerly the capital of the world, is now the head and source of every crime. And the celebrated Pico della Mirandola, addressed Pope Leo X. in the following words: "There is in the church of God neither shame nor modesty left; there exists no righteousness; piety has been converted into superstition; vice is honoured and virtue proscribed; the converts and nunneries are become public brothels, where the most abominable sins are daily and freely committed. The priests and bishops are so extremely ignorant, that they cannot even say the proper prayers before the crucified Christ; and they are publicly Simoniacs." (vid. Fascialum Temporum, p. 209.) If to these we add the crimes of superstition, of intolerance and of fanatic rage, together with all those perpetrated by the ambition of the

clergy, it will clearly appear that the Christian religion has, perhaps, been the greatest calamity inflicted upon mankind. It was the immediate cause of the ruin and downfall of the Roman Empire; it destroyed all ancient learning, which was only accidentally restored by a concourse of unforeseen circumstances, some of them flowing out of superstition itself. By its confederacy with the barbarians who invaded Europe, Christianity entailed on that part of the globe, a system of oppression, of despotism, of ignorance, and of privileged bodies, which nations have been struggling against for two centuries, without having yet succeeded in throwing off the yoke of priestcraft combined with aristocracy; while the union of both have been strengthened, in our days, by the dread which the oppressors of mankind have of the progress of reason. But, however interrupted and oppressed, reason must ultimately prevail, and overthrow the huge, monstrous, and hideous edifice of error and tyranny, which already totters on its frail and undermined basis.

The only circumstance not yet noticed, and which is wanting to render my proofs complete, is the prediction of the approaching catastrophe which was to destroy, not only Jerusalem, but the whole globe and universe, and announced by Jesus in the most clear and positive terms in different passages of the gospels, and particularly in that of John, and in the apocalypse. To understand the sense of this prediction, it is proper to state, that the opinion of an approaching conflagration, by which the globe was to be destroyed at the expiration of 6000 years, reckoned from its supposed commencement, was very prevalent in the first centuries of Christianity, and long after maintained by a sect,

called the millenarians, who, altho' as orthodox as Jesus, were declared heretical by his Church. According to the computation of the Septuagint or Greek translation of the Jewish Books, 5270 years had elapsed from the creation of the world to the time of Jesus; therefore, the expiration of the 6000 years, and the end of the world, were not very far. Jesus pronounces it to be very near, and tells John that he would not die before the second coming of Jesus. This is the reason why he teaches his disciples to abandon all earthly ties and concerns, and to look up only to Heaven, and to the new celestial Jerusalem.

This opinion of the destruction of the world at the end of 6000 years, by a conflagration, was founded on astronomical, or astrological emblems not understood by the vulgar, who took it in the strict sense. The real meaning of it was, that 6 months after the winter solstice, when the ground was covered with water, the Sun attaining his full strength would burn the plants and parch the soil. And so it took place every year in Egypt; for, previous to the rising of the Nile about the Summer solstice, the soil was parched up, and all vegetation destroyed. The first epoch, says Aristotle, was called a deluge and the second a conflagration. The months were converted into thousands of years, after the manner of all the ancient Cosmogonies, in which the periods of the supposed creation are represented as days, as *thousands of years*, or simply as *ages* or *periods*. In the Jewish Cosmogony, days are employed; in those of the Persians, and of the ancient Tuscans, a *thousands years* correspond to each of such days, which being anterior to the existence of the Sun, are manifestly *periods*; the Brahmins reckon by ages, containing

each many thousand years. These Cosmogonies, which admitted a former deluge, led naturally to the expectation of a conflagration; and this was precisely the case with the Jewish Genesis. The writers of the gospels, adopted, beyond a doubt, the latter opinion; and it is well known, that, for a long time, the Christians looked for the dissolution of the world, the accomplishment of the prophecies of Jesus, and the coming of the New Jerusalem; and many enthusiasts are still waiting for its appearance, without suspecting the true meaning of this figurative expression. Witness the disciples of Swedenborg, Prophets Brothers, Johanna Southcott, and their deluded followers, whose credulity, in our enlightened age, and in such a city as London, fully evinces how natural and easy it is for mankind to be led astray by impostors and fanatics. We must not forget that, among the followers of Brothers, was Nathaniel Brassey Halhed, the Orientalist, a member of Parliament, and a man of great learning and of respectable character. He declared in the English House of Commons, that he was a convert to the doctrines of Prophet Brothers, and pronounced him the second Messiah!!!

Jesus had, in fact, said, "This generation shall not pass away till all is fulfilled;" in John he says, "that the end of the world is *quite at hand*;" and we have already adverted to his promise of drinking of the next new wine in paradise with his Apostles; and as it was then in the spring, or in the month of March, it is clear that he had in view, the next vintage in September. This is, moreover, the only way of accounting for his antimoral system of morals, which is inculcated throughout the four gospels, and which can only apply to a state of approaching dissolution of society

and of all relations between man and man. It is only on the eve of the final destruction of the world, that a legislator, in his senses, could command to abandon all earthly concerns; to "take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body what ye shall put on," and to sell whatsoever one possesses, giving all to the poor.

I shall conclude this chapter by one observation, which, if we wish to understand the source of the diversity of opinions that have been at various times adopted, and proscribed by the church, it is very important not to lose sight of.—While the dogmas of the Christian religion were kept secret and confined to each community of the sect, few of the Christians were aware of the sources whence had been borrowed their doctrines; but as soon as these were divulged, and men of some learning became converts to Christianity, the resemblance with the ancient religions, being self evident, could not be denied, or even controverted; and the spiritual notions of Plato were as evidently the source of all the Christian tenets respecting the Trinity, the Father, the Son, or the word. It became, therefore, necessary to endeavour by all possible means, to efface, as far as could be effected, the features that rendered apparent the filiation of all the Christian system, the offspring of other more ancient religions and philosophical sects. For this purpose, not only the books of the antagonists of Christianity, but most of those of such early sects as bore the greatest affinity to the Mithriac, and other parent systems of the new sect, were destroyed; and for the same reason were the followers of Manes proscribed and persecuted, and the most ancient writings of Christian authors

rejected and burnt. With the same view, was the philosophy of Aristotle universally preferred to that of Plato, which was proscribed and persecuted, for no other reason, but because it was the original, upon which was built, and from whence was taken the senseless doctrine of a Trinity, of a Father, a Son, and a Holy Ghost. Aristotle, far superior to Plato in sound reasoning, and by no means favourable to the Christian metaphysical reveries, had the great merit of enabling the church to set aside Plato, to avoid their doctrines being traced to him; and they so obscured the text of Aristotle as to render it as unintelligible as their own doctrines. The same happens with the religion of Mahomet; which, although a modification of Judaism and Christianity, has shewn itself as inimical to both these systems as to Magism. It is natural and common for man when arrived at a high degree of elevation, to attempt to efface the traces of his humble origin, and the remembrance of his benefactors to whom he is indebted for his actual splendour.

(To be continued.)

The Correspondent.

Magna est Veritas et Prevalet.

NEW-YORK, MAY 5, 1827.

LECTURES DELIVERED AT THE FREE PRESS ASSOCIATION.

On the Inconsistencies, Contradictions, and Absurdities of the Bible.—By the Secretary.

(Continued from our last.)

Let us now inquire what is to be understood by the word *beginning* used by the author of the first chapter of Genesis. Does it mean *commencement*? If it does, it teaches nothing. It is only saying, that when the world had a beginning it commenced; or when it had a com-

mencement it had a beginning. Not the most distant hint is given as to the period in which the work spoken of is said to have been performed—whether one thousand—ten thousand—one million, or ten millions of years ago. Neither do we find in any part of the Bible a clue to unravel this mystery. Chronologists have been at great pains to obviate the difficulty. But in this, as in all other attempts to explain these writings, they have only rendered them the more obscure by their conflicting statements.

According to the Hebrew text, 4004 years had elapsed from the creation of the world to the commencement of the Christian era.—The Samaritan version makes it 4305 years—a difference of 301 years; while the Septuagint makes it 5270 years; that is 1266 years more than is allowed by the Hebrew calculation. Julius Africanus, differing from all these statements, maintains that the world was made on the first day of September, and was 5508 years, 3 months and 25 days old at the birth of Jesus; or upwards of fifteen hundred years older than accords with the generally received opinion. According to Moreri, there was *seventy* systems of chronology in his time, and it would be somewhat difficult to enumerate those that have been invented since.

But giving the utmost latitude to these calculations, how can they be reconciled with the different accounts of the Egyptians, Babylonians, Arabians, Persians, Chinese, and Indians, who all concur in extending the earth's duration to a period infinitely beyond either of the statements which I have noticed. The Egyptian chronicles contain an account of no less than seventeen successive dynsties, or governments,

among the people of that country *before* the Jewish epocha's of the origin of time. It has been the usual practice of Christian writers to decry the proofs of this, furnished by Manethon the Egyptian, Berosus the Chaldean, Philo the Jew, and other authors of antiquity, because the statements of these celebrated men are hostile to the contracted views of these moderns. But the fallacious grounds on which they rest their objections, disappear in a moment when it is recollected, that Egypt is almost universally acknowledged to have been the cradle of science and literature. Could she not inform herself correctly of the history of the world who first taught the use of letters to other nations? Where was there any monument of antiquity that did not originate in Egypt? Or what learning, that was not derived from the city of the Sun? Admitting Moses to have been a real personage, it is incontrovertibly established by the books of the Christians, that he acquired his knowledge in Egypt.—“He was learned (says St. Stephen) in all the wisdom of the Egyptians.” Now, if the arts, sciences, and literature had not reached a high state of perfection in Egypt at the time the Jewish legislator is supposed to have lived, it would have been ridiculous to have traced his great acquirements to that source. We have, besides, the authority of the Jewish Rabbi Maimonides for believing, that Moses was also indebted to the Zabbians, natives of Arabia, for a number of laws, which he introduced into his code; thus establishing the great antiquity of that people also, and of their having reached a high degree of refinement, at the time Moses is said to have composed his laws.

It appears, from indisputable evidence, that only 200 or 300 years after Noah's flood, Egypt was so

excessively populous that 20,000 cities could scarcely contain its inhabitants. How can it be reconciled with any rational ideas, that, in so short a period, the three sons of Noah could produce numbers sufficient to people so many cities? The difficulty increases when we reflect that at the period Egypt was a great and flourishing empire, there were other nations on the earth, nearly as populous and as flourishing. The Assyrians boasted of a race of kings *long prior* to Noah's flood, whose succession continued down to the reign of Sardanapalus, without the least interruption by any such deluge. Eusebius, one of the Fathers of the Church, quotes from the writings of Sanchoniathon, a Phœnician, who evidently wrote long before the time of Noah; for although he enumerates ten generations previous to that of Noah, he neither mentions Adam nor Eve, nor any of their descendants. This writer refers to the works of an Egyptian named Thoth, who, he says, lived 800 years before him. But we have only to turn our attention to those vast monuments of skill, the pyramids of Egypt, to be convinced of the immense antiquity of that nation. Only think of the profound knowledge of mechanics, which the Egyptians must have possessed, to enable them to elevate to so great a height, the immense blocks of stone of which these huge buildings are composed. Consider the mathematical research, the ingenuity, and the length of time which it must have required to construct them in the masterly manner in which they appear even at the present day. To this if we add, that all recollection of the period when these stupendous fabrics were reared, is utterly effaced from the memory of man, and that no written record of the fact has for many ages existed,

we shall be able to form some faint idea of the great antiquity of that country in which the pyramids are situated.

There is still another source of evidence tending to corroborate what I have been endeavoring to illustrate, which appears to me deserving of high consideration; and that is the mythological astronomy of the ancients. Herodotus says, he was informed by the learned men of Egypt that the pole of the earth, and the pole of the ecliptic had formerly coincided. In the two ancient *Zodiacs* of *Dendera*, mentioned in Denon's travels, one of which was lately carried to Europe, the poles are represented in both situations, and in that which shows the poles at right angles, there are marks by which it appears that it was not the last time, but the first, that they were in that position.—There are also three other monuments in Egypt, namely, the *Labyrinth*, the column called *Cleopatra's Needle*, and the *Abraxes*, which shew that the poles had been three times within the plane of the Ecliptic. From the observations of persons profoundly skilled in astronomy, and who have made these monuments their particular study, it is ascertained that *forty thousand* years must have elapsed since the poles were *last* in that position. The greatest length of time which they notice comes little short of *five millions* of years. Yet, according to the records of the Hindoos, they had actually registered on a *Talisman* of porcelain, now in England, a knowledge of time for *seven or eight millions* of years! These oriental astronomers, in fact, carry their calculations so high as almost to demonstrate the eternity of the universe. We, indeed, find that this opinion was held by many ancient philosophers,

particularly by Aristotle, who was so long and so highly extolled by the Christian writers. He not only taught that the frame of the heavens and the earth was eternal, but that men and all other animals propagated their species without a first born, or principle.

How great is the inconsistency of human affairs, how wonderful the vicissitudes of nations! Not only are empires changed, but learning, manners, and religion pass from one country to another as if all could not enjoy them together. It would seem as if it was decreed, that in such a circle of time, every country and nation should take its turn in good and evil events. Learning, like the Sun, began its course in the east; then turned westward, where its light has been enjoyed for a length of years. Who knows whether, leaving Europe, it may not mark out another progress? or whether it will not be universally diffused, and enlighten the whole universe with its rays? Egypt, where all kinds of learning formerly flourished, is now sunk in a state of barbarity. She preserved her sacred rites and literature inviolable until the time of the Persians; and Cambyses was the first who spoiled, and demolished her temples, wounded her god Apis, and treated her priests with marked contempt. Darius, it is true, afterwards treated the Egyptians with great humanity; but when Alexander invaded the country they felt the necessity of submitting to his yoke, without a struggle. From this time, the wisdom of the Egyptians and their priests gradually degenerated; but not so rapidly as to prevent the most celebrated Grecian philosophers from visiting the country in search of knowledge. The ascendancy of the Romans, and the burning of the Alexandrian library, gave the death blow to the

ancient literature of Egypt. There was afterwards a celebrated school at Alexandria, composed of Grecians, Jews and Christians, which continued till the time of the Saracens, by whom and the Turks, who succeeded them, all Egypt was reduced to a state of mental barbarism.

But the Egyptians were not the only nation, whose monuments of antiquity and learning, were nearly all swept from the face of the earth by the ruthless hands of ignorance and fanaticism. The learning and antiquities of other empires were doomed to share a similar fate. Among the Arabians, we possess in the book of Job, who is acknowledged to have been much more ancient than Moses, an undeniable proof that science and learning had reached a high pitch of cultivation many ages before the commencement of our vulgar era. Of the Persians and the Phœnicians, called Philistines in the Bible, we are not without evidence of great antiquity in the numerous fragments of ancient books, in the language of these countries, mentioned by Jewish as well as by Christian writers.

Ctesisthenes, a Grecian philosopher, says he was told by Berosus, the historian of Babylon, who was in that city when Alexander visited it, that 402,000 years before his time "the axis of the earth was parallel to the plane of the ecliptic." The Bible chronology places the building of the Tower of Babel, 115 years after the destruction of mankind by the flood, and even while Noah was yet alive. But how reconcile this with the great number of persons that must have been employed, and the scientific knowledge, (the result of long research) requisite to raise so lofty a tower? Its height was estimated at 81,000 feet; and Herodotus states that it had a road-way on

its outside, which went eight times round its ascent; so as to give the whole the appearance of eight towers one above another. It is admitted, indeed, in the Bible, that its top *reached to heaven*. We are assured, that the walls which surrounded the city of Babylon, were 300 feet high, 87 feet thick, and 70 miles in circumference; that it had 625 squares laid out in gardens, and that it contained many more houses than London, which is the largest city of modern Europe; and as Herodotus mentions that the houses were generally three or four stories high, we must admit the existence of an immense population, which had grown to its height after the elapse of many ages, and which employed the industry, and consumed the produce of many extensive and populous provinces.

From these facts, I hold it to be demonstrated, that the earth could not be peopled, and such immense improvements take place in the short space allotted for these changes in Bible chronology. Those vast empires where we find arts and sciences in perfection, the distinction of ranks and estates, a government, a religion, and difference in worship, prove beyond all dispute that they were of considerable standing at the time, it is said, in the Jewish writings, the world was created.

(To be continued.)

MISCELLANY.

Saint Bento.—The procession commemorative of this saint, in Catholic countries, happens during Lent. This farce is as follows: a group of men in penitents' hoods, very similar to dominos, precede a stand, on which are seen three men, representing Abraham, Isaac, and the angel: a wooden ram on one side completes the group. At every

pause made for the resting of the stand bearers, (who are occasionally relieved,) Isaac lies down on the altar; Abraham lifts up his arm to strike; and the angel, at the same moment, jerks it back by means of a piece of tape, of which he holds one end while the other is tied to Abraham's wrist. This is done in such a manner, that very devout spectators can scarcely refrain from the most boisterous mirth. The angel generally tries to give so violent a jerk as almost to upset poor Abraham; and but that they choose for the latter character a poor good-natured fellow, one might expect to see these angelic practical jokes answered by a good box on the ear. The penitents who precede, and those who follow the above group, flog themselves occasionally with the disciples, but in doing so, they generally contrive to hurt themselves much less than the bystanders, whom they hit now and then as if by accident, with the knotted end of the rope. This they do with more impunity, owing to the concealment of their faces, in their purple two-holed dominos.

Holyrood.—The monastery of *Sancta Crucis* or Holyrood, at Edinburgh, was founded by David I. of Scotland, in the year 1128, and, like most other religious establishments of the dark ages, originated in superstition. The account generally given is, that it was established by that monarch, to perpetuate the memory of a miraculous interposition of heaven, said to have been manifested in his favor. This event is narrated by the historians of those times, with all their usual enthusiasm when treating of such subjects.

The king, say they, while hunting in the forest of Drumselch, one of the royal forests, which surrounded the rocks and hills to the east of the city of Edinburgh, on Roodday, or exal-

tation of the cross, was attacked by a stag, and would, in all probability, have fallen a sacrifice to the enraged animal, which overbore both him and his horse, (as his attendants were left at a considerable distance behind,) when lo! an arm, wreathed in a dark cloud, and displaying a cross of the most dazzling brilliancy, was interposed between them, and the affrighted animal fled to the recesses of the forest in the greatest confusion. This having put an end to the chase, the monarch repaired to the castle of Edinburgh; where, during the night, in a dream, he was advised, as an act of gratitude for his deliverance, to erect an abbey, or house for canons regular, upon the spot where this miraculous interposition had taken place.

In obedience to this visionary command, the king endowed this monastery for canons regular of the Augustine order, a colony of whom he brought from an abbey of the same kind at St. Andrews, and dedicated his new establishment to the honor of the said cross. The celestial relic having been left in his possession, was enshrined in silver, and placed with great pomp and ceremony on the high altar, where it remained for ages a source of riches and comfort to its numerous devotees, till the battle of Durham, 1436, when its virtues appear to have deserted its possessors, as it there fell into the hands of the English, and was long preserved by them with zealous veneration in the cathedral church of Durham. The texture of this celestial cross was of such a nature, that none could tell of what materials it was composed; and, in the lapse of ages, it has hitherto eluded the search of the antiquarian.

Polish Jews.—Although the Rabbins compose the great body of the Jews in Poland, there exists other

denominations, the numbers and peculiarities of which are too considerable not to strike the inquisitive traveller. These are the Karaites, the Chasidim, and the Zoharites, or followers of Sabbathai Tzevi. The Chasidim or Pietists' sect dates its origin no farther back than the year 1740, when its doctrines were first broached by Israel Baalshem, in the small country town of Flussty, in Poland. In the course of about twenty years, his fame, as an exorcist, and master of the Cabbala, spread to such a degree, that he obtained a great number of followers in Poland, Moldavia, and Wallachia. This rabbi gave out, that he alone was possessed of the true mystery of the sacred name; that his soul at certain times left the body, in order to receive revelations in the world of spirits; and that he was endowed with miraculous powers, by which he was able to control events, both in the physical and intellectual world. His followers were taught to look to him for the absolution of every crime they might commit; to repress every thing like reflection on the doctrines of religion; to expect the immediate appearance of the messiah; and, in sickness, to abstain from the use of medicine—assured, that their spiritual guides, of whom several made their appearance on the death of the founder, were possessed of such merits as would procure for them instant recovery. The accusations of gross immorality brought against the members of this sect by the Lithuanian rabbi, Israel Loebel, have been called in question, and are supposed rather to have originated in prejudice, than to have any foundation in truth: but one who has had the best opportunities of investigating the subject, states that their morals are most obnoxious, and that the representa-

tions that have been given of them are by no means exaggerated. They are not only at enmity with all the other Jews, but form the bitterest and most bigotted enemies of the Christian religion. They believe that the messiah, whom they are hourly expecting, will be a mere man, but will come with such an effulgence of glory, as to produce a complete regeneration in the heart of every Jew, and deliver them thenceforth from every evil. To their rabbins, whom they honour with the name of Zadiks, or "righteous," they pay almost divine homage. The extravagance of their gestures during their public service entitles them to the appellation of the "Jewish Jumpers." Working themselves up into ecstasies, they break out into fits of laughter, clap their hands, jump up and down the synagogue in the most frantic manner, and turning their faces towards heaven, they clench their fists, and, as it were, dare the Almighty to withhold from them the objects of their requests. This sect has so increased of late years, that in Russia, Poland, and European Turkey, it is reported to exceed in number that of the rabbinites in these parts.

Religious Dramas.—Although the *Saints* of the present day are indignant that the Drama should be patronized in a Christian country, they seem to forget that this method of conveying instruction was resorted to by their *pious* ancestors, as will appear by the following, from the original MSS. in the Harleian Library:—

"At Crawly's booth, over against the Crown Tavern, in Smithfield, during the time of Bartholomew Fair, will be presented a little opera, called the Old Creation of the World, yet newly revived; with the addition of Noah's Flood; also several foun-

tains playing water during the time of the play. The last scene does present Noah and his family coming out of the ark, with all the beasts, two by two, and all the fowls of the air, seen in a prospect sitting upon trees; likewise over the ark is seen the rising sun, in a most glorious manner; moreover, a multitude of angels will be seen, in a double rank, which presents a double prospect, one for the sun, the other for a palace, where will be seen six angels ringing of bells. Likewise machines descends from above, double and treble, with Dives rising out of Hell, and Lazarus seen in Abraham's bosom, besides several figures dancing jiggs, sarabands, and country dances, to the admiration of all spectators; with the merry conceits of Squire Punch and Sir John Spendall.—All this is completed with an entertainment of singing and dancing, with several naked swords, performed by a child of eight years of age, to the general satisfaction of all persons. Vivat Regina."

Removal.—The office of the *Correspondent* is removed from 48 Pine street, to the corner of Vesey street and Broadway, where all orders and communications are requested to be addressed.

Free Press Association.—The meetings of this Association will be held, on Sunday at 4 o'clock, P. M. in the Academy corner of Broadway and Reed street, until further notice.

To Correspondents.—The review of a Sermon, preached by C. G. Finney Stephentown, on "the refuge of Lies," has been received, and will be commenced in our next number.

"Certes" is under consideration.

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